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IDEA-0193  
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28 February 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Briefing of Mr. James E. Webb, NASA Administrator, on 24  
February 1961

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1. [REDACTED] and the undersigned briefed the new NASA Administrator, Mr. James E. Webb, on IDEALIST, CORONA, and ARGON in the latter's office on Friday, 24 February 1961. In addition, [REDACTED] brought Mr. Webb into the ranks of individuals cleared for T, TKH, and [REDACTED]

2. The briefing lasted for well over an hour, and Mr. Webb very carefully read every word of the briefing material and security forms. My personal opinion is that we should have little problem with Mr. Webb in terms of his ability to separate one program and system from the other, which is a refreshing change in the briefing of high level officials of other Agencies.

3. Several points were brought up by Mr. Webb in the course of our discussion which deserve annotation:

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a. He intends to make the role of Dr. [REDACTED] Deputy Administrator, coextensive with his own. This is in line with Mr. Webb's desire to establish Dr. [REDACTED] as the emeritus expert on space technology after his forthcoming retirement. Mr. Webb also feels that if both he and [REDACTED] can make interlocking decisions, no problem need wait for the presence of a head man for solution.

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b. Mr. Webb indicated that he intends to set Dr. [REDACTED] up as General Manager of NASA. This is a new position, and appears to be analogous to the position of General Manager of the Atomic Energy Commission. Dr. [REDACTED] who is a scientist, is being selected for this job, since Mr. Webb states that he wishes to prove to the Nation that scientists can effectively manage a billion dollar a year program without the need of non-technical administrative supervision.

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c. Mr. Webb said he intends to promote close relations with the military in an obvious attempt to reduce to a minimum the friction said to exist between competing civilian and military programs and objectives in the field of space. He indicated that he planned, for example, a weekly luncheon with the Chief of the Air Staff as a device to ensure better understanding between NASA and USAF.

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4. In connection with the proposed change in [REDACTED] position, he indicated his general desire to have [REDACTED] briefed on everything about which he had been briefed. Before informally recommending this, however, he indicated he would like to obtain [REDACTED] concurrence in the proposed move. It is my suggestion that in a week or so we should recontact Mr. Webb to see if he wishes us to proceed with the briefing of [REDACTED]

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5. Mr. Webb also indicated that he might also wish to retain Dr. [REDACTED] former NASA Administrator, as a consultant to move on space matters, and if CIA desires, on programs where prominent NASA officials were briefed: i.e., IDEALIST, CORONA, ARGON, etc. Without acceding to this request, [REDACTED] indicated for the time being we should not attempt to deflect any move to keep [REDACTED] in the family.

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6. On the whole I believe this was a very useful discussion. Mr. Webb strikes us as a completely receptive and energetic individual whose questions about our Projects and whose desires to know what is going on in the intelligence field are considerable. Mr. Webb indicated that he would shortly seek to have some substantive discussions with [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] on subjects such as the status of the Soviet missile and space programs and the like. I gained the distinct impression that if Mr. Webb had been in charge of NASA last summer, the outcome of our problem with the U-2 might well have been different. We advised Mr. Webb that a separate T and TKH briefing would be provided him by the Director, PIC, at a later date.

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